

VZCZCXRO3259  
RR RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH  
DE RUEHNH #0094/01 1860427  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 050427Z JUL 07  
FM AMCONSUL NAHA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0802  
INFO RHMFIUU/18WG CP KADENA AB JA  
RHMFIUU/CG FIRST MAW  
RUHBABA/CG III MEF CAMP COURTNEY JA  
RUHBANB/CG MCB CAMP BUTLER JA  
RUHBBEA/CG THIRD FSSG CAMP KINSER JA  
RUHBABA/CG THIRD MARDIV  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/COMMARCORBASESJAPAN CAMP BUTLER JA  
RHOVVKG/COMSEVENTHFLT  
RUHBVMA/CTF 76  
RUYLBAH/DODSPECREP OKINAWA JA  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 0265  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 0155  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 0859  
RHMFIUU/NAVCRIMINVSEVRV OKINAWA JA  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 0340  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 0300  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0800  
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0001  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NAHA 000094

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [JA](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA PAPERS OVER OKINAWANS' DIFFERENCES ON MASS SUICIDES

1. (SBU) Summary: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's (MOE) decision on March 30, 2007 to delete references to "military ordered" mass suicides from high school textbooks has met a strong reaction in Okinawa, where the large majority assumes the over 700 suicides that took place on the Kerama Islands in 1945, in addition to mass suicides elsewhere in the prefecture during World War II, were the result of orders by the former Imperial Japanese Army. MOE's refusal to reverse its position is having a negative impact on the LDP in the upcoming Upper House Diet election. End Summary.

#### Okinawans Divided on Cause of Mass Suicides

2. (SBU) Following a regular screening of 224 high school textbooks, MOE told seven publishers on March 30 to revise their descriptions of mass suicides during the Battle of Okinawa. Texts would be changed from "the former Imperial Japanese Army forced civilians" to commit suicide, to "some residents committed or were driven into committing suicide." In a written statement MOE said, "It was not possible to conclude that the military ordered civilians to commit mass suicide." According to Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Okinawa's Tsunehiro IHA, on June 13 MOE Policy Chairman Yukihiko FUMURA admitted the Japanese military connection and responsibility for the mass suicides by civilians, but said the issue was whether there was a direct military order. On July 4, Fumura again rebuffed an Okinawa Prefectural Government petition delivered by Vice Governor Katsuko ASATO and other Okinawan prefectural and city assembly representatives. He asked the representatives to understand that the decision was made by the textbook screening committee and not MOE, and reiterated that questions remained as to whether "all" the mass suicides were the result of military orders.

3. (SBU) Media editorials and anti-revision advocates, who represent the majority opinion in Okinawa, claim that the fact

that suicides occurred only where the Japanese military was located is evidence of military coercion. They also add that the military passed out grenades to civilians and instilled in them a fear of the American military. One survivor, Shigeaki Kinjo, said the Japanese military passed out grenades to local citizens a week before US Forces landed. Another, Noriko Oshiro, said she clearly remembered family and acquaintances receiving grenades and instructions on how to use them from Japanese soldiers. Survivor Shoko Oya said Japanese soldiers told her group that Americans would rape and kill the women and run over the men with their vehicles. Vice Governor Asato told MOE officials that "if even one mass suicide was the result of military orders, it should be noted in textbooks."

14. (SBU) Some dissenters from the majority view in Okinawa have questioned whether the military issued orders, or whether the horror of war simply produced an environment that influenced some civilians to commit suicide. Some Okinawan survivors say it was the absence of Japanese military that led to civilian suicides. Sumiko Tamashiro remembered that after two Japanese soldiers in the cave where she and others were hiding took their own lives, the civilians followed suit. Another survivor, Takejiro Nakamura said Japanese soldiers told civilians they could rely on them in an emergency, but fled when US forces landed on the island. Nakamura said civilians choked each other to death with their hands. Some dissenters from the majority view have hinted that the real reason that many survivors blamed the military was to cover up their own guilt for having taken part in the deaths of friends and family members.

15. (SBU) A May 2007 public opinion poll conducted by the Ryukyu Shimpō showed that 18 percent of Okinawans surveyed supported the MOE's textbook revision, suggesting a significant minority

NAHA 00000094 002 OF 002

of Okinawans doubt whether the military ordered the suicides. The Okinawa chapter of the LDP publicly split in late May because some of its members also questioned whether the suicides were the result of the environment at the time or orders. Iha said in an interview on June 5 that "what is at issue [within the LDP] is whether the Japanese military as an organization ordered the suicides or whether in the abnormality of war, these were simply actions of members of the organization."

#### Media Sees Government Cover up in MOE Decision

16. (SBU) Few survivors have testified to "direct orders." Nonetheless, the MOE's decision to revise the textbooks to omit all reference to military involvement in the suicides has allowed the anti-revisionists to ignore the lack of evidence of direct orders and concentrate on general military culpability. Many perceive MOE officials' public acknowledgement of some military involvement, coupled with the refusal of MOE to reverse its guidance to publishers, as another central government cover up of Okinawans' victimization. June editorials in local daily newspapers claimed Japan rejected "the torment of 'negative history.'" Instead of learning from history, they charged, Japanese society decided to erase any history of bad behavior by Japanese. June letters to the editors said the Japanese government and MOE were trying to fool people, and linked the government's stance on military involvement in mass suicides to its denying military responsibility for abuse of comfort women. Writers saw the MOE's decision as an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for war crimes, revive the honor of the Japanese military, and/or lie to Japanese students.

17. (SBU) The press has kept a running tally on the town and city assemblies that have passed protest resolutions against the revision and reformist former upper house Diet member, now upper house candidate, Keiko ITOKAZU has made opposing the textbook revision a top priority in her campaign. She stresses that Okinawa "must say no to a change that would lead our children to war." While Itokazu's conservative opponent Junshiro NISHIME also opposes the revision, and LDP prefectural assembly members eventually signed onto a unanimous Okinawa Prefectural Assembly (OPA) protest resolution on June 22, both Nishime and local LDP

have been tarred by what is being perceived as the current LDP administration's unwillingness to discuss reversing its decision on the textbooks.

18. (SBU) Comment: The Okinawan media's steady drumbeat on the issue, with multiple articles appearing daily in both local papers, is keeping this issue in the forefront, and it appears to be hurting the LDP in the runup to the late July upper house election, given that polls show 82 percent of local people oppose the textbook revision. Japanese military involvement in civilian suicides is assumed by the majority in Okinawa. What is seen by most Okinawans as an attempt by the government to whitewash that involvement will continue to meet a strong reaction here. End Comment.

MAHER  
REICH